

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Annual Meeting – January 15-17, 2008
Trophy Room, Idaho Department of Fish and Game
600 South Walnut
Boise, Idaho**

January 15, 2008

Commissioners met with the House & Resource Conservation Committee.

January 16, 2008

Commission Tour Boise River WMA

Commissioners met with the Senate Resource and Environment Committee.

Public Meeting

Chairman Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Commissioners Tony McDermott, Fred Trevey, Bob Barowsky, Wayne Wright, Randy Budge and Gary Power were present.

Chairman Wheeler noted that the Commission takes the public comment seriously and the Commission will review the public comments at the general meeting on January 17, 2008.

Chairman Wheeler introduced Representative Bert Stevenson, Chair of the House Resource Committee. Representative Stevenson thanked the Commission for taking the time to meet with the House Resource Committee.

Chairman Wheeler introduced Mitch Silvers, Senator Crapo's office who was in attendance.

Al Marion, Garden Valley, representing self spoke regarding muzzleloader rules. Mr. Marion is pleased that muzzleloader rules are being reconsidered. He stated that he believes that the decisions made a year ago were based on a lot of misinformation. Mr. Marion would like for the Commission to sort out scientific truth and reality from myth and emotion.

John Wardian, Meridian, noted that he has been hunting for 30 years with black powder and just started with traditional and is in favor of inlines in the field.

Merle E. Hammons representing self referenced the 2007 hunting regulations for muzzleloader. He is in favor of using in-lines.

Mike Murray representing Idaho Muzzleloader Association (IMA), stated that IMA supported the alternatives that were offered last year. Mr. Murray spoke about the new

rules on muzzle loading and short range hunt units. He feels loose powder and open ignition would be the best compromise.

Bill Mattravers, Boise, representing self, stated that he is in support of the pivoting hammer going away. Mr. Mattravers would like to know what process the Commission used to determine what equipment you are going to use, data used for proposals and rainchecks for the fires seasons. Director Groen noted that staff would be available to answer Mr. Mattravers questions.

Tim Rogers, Boise, spoke regarding archery hunting changes when it went from recurves to compounds, let-off, similar to the muzzleloading issues. He stated that in-lines are bringing more technology.

Charles Starks, representing Traditional Muzzleloading Association (TMA), agrees with Al Marion comments. TMA supports the no sabot rule and no jacketed bullet rule. He stated that the Idaho season was established as a traditional season.

Jamie Gould, Idaho Muzzleloaders Association, spoke regarding the rules for muzzleloading and supports loose powder and sabots and allow inline back. IMA would like the Commission to review reinstating all of previous traditional hunts from two years ago and to add Unit 33.

Bill Hatch, Meridian, would like to see the hunting regulations returned to the prior year regulations. Mr. Hatch stated that the 209 primer is better, powder makes no difference and scopes are ok for older eyes.

Lenny Nelson would like to see Unit 39 close one week earlier for archery hunting. Mr. Nelson stated he would like to see less ATV access and would like to see more enforcement.

Bill Squires spoke regarding muzzleloaders and is opposed to the pivot hammer.

Jason Wright had questions regarding the opening date of October 10 for deer seasons versus the 5th. He stated that he is seeing very few mature bucks in Unite 39 and wanted to know if the helicopter counting this year reflected this.

Ed Rankin, Boise, thanked the Commission for taking the time to revisit the muzzleloader issue. Mr. Rankin would like the regulations to go back to the 2006 regulations. These rules provide the restrictions to keep the sport at a fairly primitive level.

Nate Helm, representing Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife (SFW), provided three handouts to the Commission. The first, a copy of SFW comments on the Draft Wolf Population Management Plan and the Draft Mule Deer Management Plan; a petition to protect Idaho's wild steelhead regarding the plan for the Nez Perce Tribe to implement

gill netting; and a letter to Chairman Wheeler with additional comments on the Wolf Management Plan page 33 regarding “Removal to Increase Ungulates”.

Jim Justice, representing self, would like the Commission to reconsider going back to the 2006 season, in favor of loose powder, get rid of side lock, and allow sabots.

Kevin O’Hara thanked the Commission for overturning the previous muzzleloader rules and to clarify whether or not power belt bullets are legal.

Ray Steiger spoke regarding inline and black powder and feels this is just keeping up with technology.

Clinton Scott McCutcheon spoke regarding why hunting grouse and turkeys with cross bows is not allowed and would like for the Commission to consider.

Chuck Middleton spoke regarding wolf management and would like to see trapping as a legal method of take for wolves. Mr. Middleton is in support of in-line muzzleloaders.

Bill Bates, Boise, would like to see the muzzle loader rules stay the way it was in 2007. He spoke regarding the A Tag which allows archery hunting in August, shoot a spike bull and then go to muzzle loading hunts. He would also like to see unlimited draw hunt come back to limit number of hunters allowing the hunter to choose the weapon you want to use.

Tom Demorest, Diamond D Ranch, in Unit 27 spoke regarding wolves and seasons for hunting. He stated that a different type of season would be needed in the back country where the area is not available to sportsmen and hunters. He feels trapping would be needed in this area.

Gene Fredericksen, submitted a letter regarding muzzle loaders asking that his letter be part of the public record. Mr. Fredericksen urges the Commission to return to the pre-2007 regulations on muzzle loader, including the use of pellets and sabots.

Bob Minter, Ada County Fish and Game League, submitted a letter regarding proposed upland bird changes. Mr. Minter noted the following: clarify the WMA pheasant hunter orange rule and youth pheasant and turkey hunt seasons.

David Goodwin, Star, submitted a letter to the Commission regarding muzzleloading regulations. Mr. Goodwin would like for the Commission to allow in-lines in every muzzle hunt.

Bruce Horton, Idaho Falls, submitted a letter of comment to be record as public comment regarding muzzleloader hunts. Mr. Horton supports using in-line muzzleloaders if no copper, brass and or plastic are allowed during any muzzleloader hunting season.

Ed Lindahl, submitted a letter of comment to the Commission asking to be recorded as public comment regarding the news editorial dated January 14th “Wolves are Here to Stay” by Director Groen.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

January 17, 2008

Chairman Wheeler called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m with Commissioners Tony Mc Dermott, Fred Trevey, Bob Barowsky, Wayne Wright, Randy Budge and Gary Power present.

MISCELLANEOUS

Agenda Changes

Chairman Wheeler noted that agenda item # 15 Mule Deer Management Plan will be moved to agenda item # 4 and # 14 will be dropped.

Review of Public Comment

Commissioners discussed the public meeting comments to include muzzleloader, seasons in Unit 39, Bill Mattravers questions, crossbow hunting for grouse and turkey, opening date for deer season, wolf seasons and trapping comments, SFW comments on the Wolf Management Plan, and A tags in the Sawtooth. Director Groen stated that 13 of the comments dealt with in-lines which will be addressed and 4 comments to take a look at 2006 regulations. Director Groen noted that a letter from Ed Lindahl regarding the editorial on wolves would be added to the list of public comments for the record.

REPORT

Idaho Mule Deer Management Plan

Brad Compton, Wildlife Game Manager provided a report to the Commission on the status of the final draft plan and what the Department is recommending as the final Mule Deer Management Plan. (Appendix 41, Exhibit 1). Mr. Compton noted the efforts of staff Dave Parrish, Regional Supervisor and Randy Smith, Regional Wildlife Manager, Magic Valley Region who were instrumental in development of the plan. Mr. Compton's report covered modifications to the original draft, fundamental changes to mule deer management, and key issues raised during public scoping.

Commission discussion followed. The Commission would like to delay action on the proposed Idaho Mule Deer Management Plan until the March meeting. The Commission was not given adequate time to review the plan. Commissioner Randy Budge expressed concerns that sportsmen groups and hunters would not have an opportunity to comment on the changes made to the original draft plan. Other concerns discussed were buck:doe ratios and antlerless hunting.

08-01 Commissioner Budge moved and Commissioner Wright seconded a motion THAT THE (1) COMMISSION DEFER ACTION ON THE FINAL APPROVAL OF THE MULE DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN UNTIL THE MARCH MEETING; (2) AND DURING THE INTERIM PERIOD THAT THE STAFF TAKE THE MOST RECENT DRAFT AND MAKE ANY TWEAKING OF AREAS OF CONFLICT AND COME UP WITH WHAT YOU WANT TO CALL THE FINAL DRAFT PLAN AND TAKE TO VARIOUS MEDIA, POST ON DEPARTMENT WEBSITE AND SOLICIT THE PUBLIC FOR ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OF THE PLAN; (3) STAFF MOVE FORWARD WITH ANTICIPATION OF APPROVAL OF THE PLAN AND TAKE DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION THAT WHEN THE SEASONS GO OUT OF THE REGIONS THAT YOU PROVIDE MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES TO RECEIVE COMMENT ON (4) SCHEDULE A WORKSHOP WITH THE COMMISSION AND KEY STAFF TO REVIEW THE RESULTS OF THE FINAL DRAFT . The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Commissioner Budge left the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

MISCELLANEOUS

Director's Report

Director Groen referenced the staff reports in the Commission agenda book.

Director Groen recognized the following staff:

- Jeff Gould for his efforts in securing funding for the seeding for the Murphy Complex Fire
- Scott Reinecker and Dave Parrish, Regions 3 and 4 for the volunteer seeding efforts
- Thanks to Mike Keckler for his work on the Fish and Game News publication
- Vicki Runnoe and her efforts on the Richard Louv presentation
- Evin Oneale and his efforts in developing a Kids Web page
- Bill Hutchinson's work on the Hatchery Program
- Sharon Kiefer and her work on US vs Oregon
- Virgil Moore and his efforts to acquire the Albertson's Building for a new Headquarters building
- Jon Heggen and his work on OHV's and Enforcement efforts

- Jim Unsworth Bighorn Sheep / domestic sheep serving as co- chairman of the committee on the Governor's task force group
- Director Groen noted the JFAC presentation on February 1st and that Steelhead are above 10 year average, should be a good season

Commission Reports

Each Commissioner provided a Regional update report.

Panhandle Region, Commissioner Mc Dermott:

- Commends all Idaho Department of Fish and Game staff
 - Perform a great job and share a passion for wildlife
- 2007 was a successful year in LPO predator control efforts
- 8,000 rainbow trout and over 23,000 lake trout removed by anglers and netting gear
- Nutrient restoration and protective fishing rules are resulting in a sharp increase in the number of quality size rainbow trout in the Kootenai River
- Increase in the number of bull elk taken during the late season short-range weapon hunt compared with previous years late season muzzleloader hunts
- Aerial surveys to estimate elk numbers and assess population structure as weather permits
- 250 turkeys were trapped and transplanted from the Kootenai Valley to Southern Idaho
- With increasing snow depths some big game depredations are starting to occur
- Phil Cooper, Pete Gardner, and Craig Walker all Panhandle staff members graduated from the Idaho Certified Public Manager Program

Southwest Region, Commissioner Barowsky:

- Sagebrush seed collection
 - 759 volunteers collected 3,325 pounds of raw sagebrush seed for fire rehabilitation
- March 1 bitterbrush and sagebrush planting will begin
 - Expect to plant 55,000 seedlings
- Received 157 turkeys from North Idaho and transplanted on Andrus WMA
- Payette Forest Travel Plan to be signed in February
- Sportsmen's Breakfast scheduled for January 22 in Garden Valley
- Owyhee County Sage grouse local working group meeting scheduled for January 23 to discuss listing status and project proposals for coming year
- Nampa fisheries has an ongoing creel survey on the white sturgeon fishery in the Snake River below C. J. Strike Dam
- From June through November 1,100 sturgeon were caught and released with another 1,100 fished hooked but not landed
- The Region is still facing environmental issues in the area with housing developments

Clearwater Region, Commissioner Trevey:

- Attended the Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting to discuss wolf management
- Sportsmen Breakfasts successful in the Region will schedule others in the surrounding communities
- Coordination effort with the Forest Service to revitalize the Crapo Elk Initiative
 - Review of the initiative
- Staff is working with Forest Service on OHV Travel Plans
- Implementation of Motorized Access Program on Redbird property
 - Open from December – April and June – July
 - By Permit only Sunday – Tuesday
 - Maximum of six ATV's per day
- Continuing effort with the salvage timber sales in the Craig mountain area
 - Jim White is doing a excellent job of leading this effort
- Youth Programs are going great
- Seeing positive results in the nutrient restoration at Dworshak reservoir to enhance kokanee

Magic Valley Region, Commissioner Wright:

- Expressed appreciation to Director Groen for his efforts on the Murphy Complex Fire and to Regional Staff for the great job
- Average snowpack in the Magic Valley
- Elk are moving into Ketchum
- Elk feeding was initiated at the Bullwacker in early December
- 92 mule deer does and fawns were radio collared from five locations throughout the region during the last week of December
 - Animals captured appeared to be in good shape with most fawns weighing in between 60 and 80 pounds
- Working with DEQ this fall to collect samples from various fisheries throughout the region for mercury testing
- Healthy deer and elk populations have lead to an increase in illegal hunting opportunities
- RES Company is looking at putting in 20-200 wind generators in the area
- The region has been asked to complete impact studies for wildlife

Salmon Region, Commissioner Power:

- Comments on the success of the river reconnects trying to get cold water back into the main streams has increased the number of fish
- Winter surveys going on for mountain goats
- Aerial surveys for elk in units 36A, 36B, 28, 21A and 21
- First year for radio collaring in the Middle Fork of the Salmon for deer
- Winter feeding is in good shape
- Good turn out for the planning sessions in the Region
 - Hearing positive comments from hunters

Upper Snake Region, Commissioner Wheeler:

- Close to normal snow pack and wildlife is doing pretty well
- Reports of good hunting season
- Thanks to Jim Fredericks and his work on the Island Park reservoir
- Positive comments on deer season

MISCELLANEOUS

Request for Fishing Tournament

Director Groen presented a request to the Commission (Appendix 41, Exhibit 2) to approve a fishing tournament to be called the “Roger Rue Memorial Classic” to be held in the summer to honor Roger Rue of Jerome, Idaho. Mr. Rue has been a true ambassador to fishing. Commission consensus is to honor the request for a tournament.

Consent Calendar

08-02 Commissioner McDermott moved and Commissioner Barowsky seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE NOVEMBER 6, AND NOVEMBER 13-15, 2007 MINUTES WITH THE CORRECTION TO ADD COMMISSIONER POWER AS SECOND TO THE MOTION 07-98 ON PAGE 119. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

08-03 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner McDermott seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE FINANCIAL REPORT AND BUDGET MODIFICATION FOR EAGLE HATCHERY AS PRESENTED. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

08-04 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner Wright seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE DEPARTMENT NOMINATIONS AS PRESENTED FOR THE WINTER FEEDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

RULES

Big Game: Nonbiological for all Big Game Animals

Brad Compton, Wildlife Game Manager, presented the proposed changes for nonbiological rules for all big game animals. Mr. Compton distributed a summary of public comments (Appendix 41, Exhibit 3) received on the muzzleloader equipment rules.

The Commission considers changes to non-biological rules for big game animals in January each year. Non-biological rules include: method of take, equipment restrictions, allocation of controlled hunt permits/tags, etc. Biological rules, considered in March, include: seasons, bag limits, sex restrictions, and species restrictions.

RULE: 13.01.08.410. Unlawful methods of take.

In January 2007, the Department recommended and the Commission adopted changes to muzzleloader equipment rules. Nearly 4,000 hunters commented during 2006 on the original proposals with roughly equal numbers supporting and opposing the proposed rule changes. While many hunters support the new rules, many others do not. The most controversial rule change has been the requirement for a pivoting hammer, functionally prohibiting the use of many in-line muzzleloaders in muzzleloader-only hunts. Additionally, the pivoting hammer requirement has been confusing to many hunters, generating numerous requests to the Department to clarify whether individual muzzleloaders are legal to use. In-line muzzleloaders have no ballistic, or overall range, advantage over 'side-lock' muzzleloaders.

The Department recommendation is to eliminate the external pivoting hammer requirement from the current muzzleloader-only hunt rules.

08-05 Commissioner Mc Dermott moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AS PRESENTED. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

REPORT

Hunter Survey Report

Bruce Ackerman, Wildlife Staff Biologist, provided a report to the Commission on the Mandatory Harvest Report system, including successes, challenges, and potential changes for improvement (Appendix 41, Exhibit 4). He noted that in 1998, the Department implemented a new Mandatory Harvest Report (MHR) system to estimate total harvest of deer, elk, and pronghorn. All deer, elk, and pronghorn hunters must complete and file a MHR, regardless of harvest success. Currently, the Department issues approximately 250,000 reports to hunters annually, with nearly 80% compliance. Approximate annual cost to the Department is \$250,000.

The MHR has increased the amount of information, and in some cases improved the information, used for making management decisions. However, paper copies sent through the mail, invalid responses, and declining compliance over the past decade continually provide challenges to obtaining accurate and timely harvest information.

RULES

Rules: Upland Game Birds and Animals

Don Kemner, Wildlife Staff Biologist, presented the Department recommendations for the 2008-09 and 2009-10 Upland Game, Upland Game Bird, Migratory bird and Falconry Seasons and rules (Appendix 41, Exhibit 5).

08-06 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2008-09 AND 2009-10 UPLAND GAME, UPLAND GAME BIRD, MIGRATORY BIRD AND FALCONRY SEASONS AND RULES. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Rules: Furbearers

Don Kemner, Wildlife Staff Biologist, presented the Department recommendations for the 2008-09 and 2009-10 Furbearer seasons (Appendix 41, Exhibit 6).

08-07 Commissioner Power moved and Commissioner McDermott seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2008-09 AND 2009-10 FURBEARER SEASONS. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

REPORT

Hunter Education Graduate License

Ron Fritz, Statewide Hunter Education Coordinator, provided a report on the Hunter Education Graduate License. Mr. Fritz noted that in 2003, the department began to provide a Hunter Education Graduate License (HEGL) to all hunter education graduates 10 – 17 years of age. This license allows a young hunter to hunt for upland game (excluding turkey) as a 10 – 11 year old. Older youth 12 – 17 years of age wishing to hunt big game as well as upland game can turn in the HEGL for a regular Junior Hunting License at a discounted price. The intent of this program was to enable a young hunter to be able to get into the field as soon as possible. It was further hoped that receipt of the HEGL would prompt these young hunters would go on to purchase hunting licenses in subsequent years. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. License purchases by HEGL holders have declined during 2004 – 2007. While 61 percent of 2003 HEGL holders purchased hunting licenses in 2004, only 42 percent of this same group purchased hunting licenses in 2007. Apparently, receiving a HEGL did not prompt young hunters to continue to participate in the sport. In addition, increasing numbers of volunteer instructors began complaining about the large amount of paperwork the HEGL entailed.

Instructors also pointed out that the HEGL did not allow 10 – 11 year olds to hunt turkey, a primary game species for the age group. Staff recommends that the issuance of the HEGL be discontinued.

08-08 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Power seconded a motion TO ELIMINATE THE HUNTER EDUCATION GRADUATE LICENSE. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Idaho Fish and Game / Idaho Outfitter and Guides Licensing Board MOU

Presented by Brad Compton, Wildlife Game Manager and Marcus Gibbs, Commission Liaison, Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board.

Marcus Gibbs, Commission Liaison, introduced Director Jake Howard and board members Scott Farr and Wayne Hunsucker. Mr. Gibbs provided a brief history of the Idaho Outfitter and Guides Licensing Board.

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission (IFGC) and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) are statutorily responsible for preserving, protecting, perpetuating, and managing the state's wildlife to provide continued supplies for hunting, fishing, and trapping. The Idaho Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board (IOGLB) is statutorily responsible for regulating and licensing commercial outfitter activities within the state. Because of the mutual interest in maintaining healthy fish and wildlife resources, and providing recreational opportunity, it is important that IFGC, IDFG, and IOGLB maintain an effective coordinated and collaborative approach to the management of fish and wildlife resources and commercial outfitters. Currently there is no established framework guiding coordination among the 3 entities.

IDFG staff and members of the IOGLB have developed a proposed MOU (Appendix 41, Exhibit 7) to provide procedures and guidance for coordination and cooperation between IDFG and IOGLB. The draft has been reviewed by and received tentative approval of the IOGLB.

The MOU doesn't represent statute or administrative rule, nor does it limit existing IDFG or IOGLB obligations or authorities. Furthermore, the MOU does not commit the transfer of funds, services, or property between the parties. The MOU does provide existing IDFC and IOGLB management policies.

The MOU by itself does not represent rule making, nor initiate actions with direct influence on Idaho citizens. All actions taken subsequent to implementation of the MOU will go through existing public involvement processes conducted by the respective parties.

08-09 Commissioner McDermott moved and Commissioner Trevey seconded a motion TO ACCEPT THE IDAHO FISH AND GAME / IDAHO OUTFITTER

AND GUIDES LICENSING BOARD MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) AS PRESENTED. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Mr. Gibbs gave a brief report of his work to the Commission. He noted the work of Idaho Department Fish and Game GIS staff, Bart Butterfield and Brent Thomas for their work on maps and boundaries. Mr. Gibbs stated that IOGLB is responsible for the enforcement and behavior of outfitters in the State and appreciates the efforts from Chief Jon Heggen and his officers.

REPORT

Overview of Communication Bureau

Mike Keckler, Chief, Communications Bureau, provided an overview of the Bureau (Appendix 41, Exhibit 8). Mr. Keckler noted that the Department website receives 200,000 hits per month and that staff is working on a new home page design. Regional pages will soon be available on the website and the goal is to create a more visible presence for the Regions on the website. A Kids' Website is in the planning. The Bureau is working on a project to reorganize the hunting and fishing regulations, making the regulations easier to follow and get rid of redundant information.

Vicki Runnoe, Conservation Education Supervisor, provided an overview of the Bureau's educational program which included Hunter Education, Aquatic Education, Project Wild, Nose-to-Nose and the *Wildlife Express* publication for kids in the classroom. Ms. Runnoe referenced a program called Connecting Kids to Nature which is a national movement. She distributed a copy of a testimony titled Leave No Child Inside by Richard Louv (Appendix 41, Exhibit 9).

Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation Update

Gayle Valentine, Executive Director, briefed the Commission on Idaho Fish and Wildlife (IFWF) activities.

- Completion of two 20-acre conservation easements on the Big Wood River
- Twenty trips have been confirmed for the March Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation/Idaho Department of Fish and Game on-line trip auction
- Two IFWF board members have resigned, Gail Siemen and Julie Cloud
- IFWF is working with Idaho Transportation Department on the Foundation's proposed marketing plan to promote sales of the wildlife license plate
- IFWF Board of Directors met December 8 in Boise; the next meeting is scheduled for February 1-2 in Boise
- Eight wildlife and habitat project funding proposal submitted
 - Announcements of projects funded will be in early March 2008

LEGISLATION

2008 Legislative Update

Sharon Kiefer, Intergovernmental Policy Coordinator, provided a legislative update. Ms. Kiefer distributed copies (Appendix 41, Exhibit 10) of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game sponsored bills to the Commission and noted all six bills have been printed. The Department bills are SB1264 through SB1269.

Ms. Kiefer noted that Department staff is working with legislators on a number of other issues; OHV, grizzly bear depredation program, and 2 pole fishing validation for children that have not yet formed into a specific bill.

Ms. Kiefer noted the Department JAFAC hearing on February 1st.

REPORT

Update on Chinook Salmon

Peter Hassemer, Anadromous Fish Manager provided an update of the forecasts for spring and summer Chinook salmon returning to the Snake River this spring (Appendix 41, Exhibit 11). Mr. Hassemer noted that the salmon will begin leaving the ocean and entering the Columbia River in late February and early March. Fisheries staff will be returning to the Commission in March with recommendations for 2008 Chinook salmon sport fisheries to be conducted in the Clearwater River, Salmon River and Snake River drainages.

Selway 'A' Tag Outfitter Allocation

Brad Compton, State Big Game Manager, noted that in November 2007, the Commission established a limit on Selway 'A' elk tags (645) including allocations for resident (179), non-outfitted nonresident (254), and outfitted nonresident (212) hunters. The number of outfitted nonresident tags was based on historic use information from the Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board.

The Outfitters and Guides Licensing Board has informed us their original calculation of historic use was inaccurate, and they request an additional 2 outfitted nonresident tags be issued to reflect actual historic use (Appendix 41, Exhibit 12).

08-10 Commissioner Trevey moved and Commissioner Wright seconded a motion TO APPROVE THE STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO ADD 2 OUTFITTED

NONRESIDENT TAGS TO THE SELWAY ‘A’ ELK TAG QUOTA. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

LANDS

Land Acquisitions

Gregg Servheen, Wildlife Program Coordinator, briefed the Commission on the following land acquisition projects and asked for Commission approval for the Department to move forward with following land acquisitions.

R3 -Highland Valley Smith Property -This 62.5 acre property is located about ½ mile from the Boise River WMA headquarters with valley bottom and shrub-steppe hillside of critical mule deer winter range. The owner, Mr. Larry Smith, previously sold a portion of the property containing springs and significant wetlands to RMEF (transferred to BLM) that is now part of the WMA. Water from the springs is used to irrigate a few acres of pasture and there is a strip of riparian vegetation. A grove of large poplar trees on the property is the site of a historic stage stop and blacksmith shop. The property was previously presented to the Commission as a life estate project during Executive Session in July 2007. However, it is now proposed as a fee-title acquisition excluding the house and outbuildings based on the desires of the landowner. Costs: Approximately \$6,000/acre in capital costs. PILT is estimated at \$35/year with annual O & M costs estimated at \$500/year.

IDL/IDFG Craig Mtn. Land Exchange -- The land ownership on the Craig Mountain WMA is mixed between four primary land owners, IDFG, IDL, BLM, and the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT). This mixed ownership increases land management complexities and expenses for the respective management agencies. To seek remedies to some of these management issues, an exchange proposal was discussed with both IDL and the NPT as to their interest and participation in a three-way exchange. The NPT declined to participate in the exchange and so IDFG and IDL have moved forward based on a 2-way exchange.

Region 1- Stevens land acquisition – This (5) acre property is located in Bonner County on both the west and east bank of the Pack River approximately one mile north of highway 200, and directly north of a golf course and housing development. Approximately one acre of land lies on the east side of the Pack River adjacent to the Trout creek Habitat Segment of the Pend Oreille River Wildlife Management Area. The remaining four acres are located on the west side of the Pack River.

08-11 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Trevey seconded a motion TO PROCEED WITH THE PURCHASE OF THE LAND EXCHANGES AS PROVIDED. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

Update on Land Legacy Project

Gregg Servheen, Wildlife Program Coordinator, provided an update on the Land Legacy Project. Mr. Servheen noted that the Commission decided in May 2006 of its intent to establish a Land Legacy Trust and/or Endowment to provide long term potential for the conservation of fish and wildlife habitat in Idaho. There are three primary components to the project: 1) establishment of this trust or endowment, 2) sale of department surplus land, and 3) settlement with Bonneville Power for the outstanding wildlife mitigation.

Mr. Servheen noted that Director Groen met with U.S. Forest Service regional foresters and they agreed that they saw our priority in terms of the sale of lands to them. Based on the Director's discussion with the Forest Service and a letter back to the Department we put a package together of 13 surplus properties we proposed to the Forest Service for sale. The Forest Service FY09 budget has submitted for 3 properties for a total of \$14 million in Land and Water Conservation Fund monies. The 3 properties are Cameron, Marbel and Cougar and they are 3 of 8 on the USFS priority list. Mr. Servheen noted that this sale process could take some time to complete.

REPORT

Update on Idaho Wolf Population Management

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is planning on publishing a delisting rule on wolves by the end of February 2008. The Department has developed a Draft Wolf Population Management Plan that outlines regulated wolf harvest and population management. The Commission directed staff to collect public comment on the Draft Wolf Population Management Plan at the last commission meeting in November.

A broad-based 7-member stakeholder group was formed to help develop the plan. A public survey was conducted of 1,000 Idaho citizens, 1,000 hunters, and 1,000 livestock producers. The public comment period on the Plan ran 43 days from November 19 through December 31. Ten public open houses were held around the state in November and December and the public were requested to comment on the wolf plan either online or in writing.

Our level of management planning and implementation has increased over the last few years, and will continue to do so. The transition to full state management has been ongoing since 2002 and we are preparing to take over management of wolves as a big game animal and are developing Idaho's wolf harvest and population management strategies.

Steve Nadeau, Large Carnivore Program Manager updated the Commission on the Idaho Wolf Population Management Plan (Appendix 41, Exhibit 13). Mr. Nadeau distributed copies of Idaho Wolf Statistics (Appendix 41, Exhibit 14). The update included:

- Population Status based on latest numbers
- Public input on Wolf Plan

- Review of primary comments
- Changes suggested for the final plan
- Timeline

The Commission will take action on the proposed draft Wolf Population Management Plan at its March 5-6, 2008 meeting.

REPORT

Accommodations for Disabled Hunters

Dale Toweill, Wildlife Program Coordinator, provided an informational report on a civil rights complaint against the Department. Mr. Toweill stated that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service investigated a civil rights complaint filed by Mr. Toby Bridges (North American Muzzleloader Hunting Association) against Idaho and a number of other states. The basis of the complaint was that Idaho and other states “discriminates against hunters on the basis of disability and age by restricting the use of telescopic scopes for muzzleloader hunting.” The Department responded that older hunters and hunters with visual disabilities can use telescopic sights in any weapon hunts which are available throughout the state and constitute the majority of the big game hunting opportunity in Idaho. Muzzleloader hunts are a unique hunting opportunity based in part on the low technology and lower effectiveness of the weapon, and hunters must choose to participate in the limited muzzleloader hunts. The USFWS found that “if persons with visual disabilities were denied opportunities for reasonable modifications in the special muzzleloader season, they would not only be placed at a competitive disadvantage, but would be screened out of the main muzzleloader activity, and effectively segregated in a different activity (which is prohibited under Department of the Interior regulations).” Therefore, the USFWS has requested Idaho and the other states to provide “a written description of the process for persons with disabilities to receive special permits based on the documented need for reasonable modification during muzzleloader hunting seasons.”

Idaho has a number of permits and licenses to address various disabilities. However, none of the existing permits or licenses addresses this issue. The Department has drafted a proposed rule to create a process to allow reasonable modifications for special weapon hunting seasons.

Rule 13.01.08.410 expressly prohibits sighting devices that magnify the target image for all Archery-only, Traditional Archery-only, and Muzzleloader-only seasons.

This issue is presented to the Commission in an effort to resolve a compliance issue identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service relative to a Disability and Age Discrimination Complaint by Mr. Tony Bridges of the North American Muzzleloader Hunting Association.

Mr. Toweill distributed a draft proposal (Appendix 41, Exhibit 15) IDAPA 13.01.04.305 to the Commission for their consideration at a later date.

MISCELLANEOUS

Executive Session

08-12 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Trevey seconded a motion TO HOLD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION, PURSUANT TO IDAHO CODE 67-2345(1)(B) (F) TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL AND LITIGATION. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

08-13 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Trevey seconded a motion TO RETRACT MOTION 08-12. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

08- 14 Commissioner Wright moved and Commissioner Trevey seconded a motion TO HOLD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION, PURSUANT TO IDAHO CODE 67-2345(1)(B)(C)(F) TO DISCUSS LITIGATION, LAND AND PERSONNEL. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

08-15 Commissioner Barowsky moved and Commissioner Budge seconded a motion TO COME OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION. The motion carried in a unanimous vote.

The session ended at 7:27 p.m. with no official action taken.

Cameron Wheeler
Chairman

Cal Groen
Secretary